



RSC Policy Brief: Religious Persecution in China

July 1, 2008

In light of the upcoming 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics, there has been increased scrutiny into religious persecution taking place in China—particularly the persecution of Christians. As such, a new report has been released by the [China Aid Association](#) (CAA), a non-profit Christian organization whose mission is to detail religious persecution in China. Their most recent report shows that there is an increase in the regulation and attack on unregistered protestant churches, increased persecution of Christians in China, and a new prohibition of religious groups at the Olympics.

Summary of Report

[China: Persecution of Protestant Christians in the Approach to the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games](#)

“The approach of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games has been accompanied by a significant deterioration in religious freedom for China’s unregistered Protestant Church, also known as the house church. China continues to seriously restrict religious freedom, requiring religious activity to take place within the confines of the restrictive state-controlled bodies. Those practicing their faith outside these bodies risk sanction, with penalties including discrimination, fines, confiscation and destruction of property, arrest, humiliating treatment, torture, imprisonment and forced labour. Alongside these punishments, meetings are raided, Bibles and religious materials are confiscated and churches are destroyed.”

Background:

- “Although China permits official, registered churches to function, the government-sanctioned church organization, the Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), suffers restrictions on selection and training of clergy, location of venues, publications, finances and relationships with Christians abroad.” There are also restrictions on working with certain classes of people, including those aged eighteen and younger. Religious education in government-sanctioned seminaries is severely restricted.
- As a result of the control by the atheist Chinese government, many Christians choose to worship in unregistered churches—becoming the largest group to suffer from government persecution. Members of an unregistered church are often classified as belonging to a cult, and are subjected to harsh penalties by the Chinese government.

- Due to Chinese regulations, only a certain number of Bibles and Christian reading materials are allowed to be printed. Furthermore, the Bibles are only distributed by the official government-sanctioned church organization—the TSPM—which is itself often the source of persecutions. According to Chinese law, it is unlawful to sell Bibles at public bookstores or other public facilities, causing many Pastors, who have printed for their church community, to be arrested and imprisoned.

Pre-Olympic Crackdown on Unregistered Protestant Churches:

- According to CAA, the advent of the 2008 Beijing Olympics has corresponded with an increase in persecution of unregistered churches and Christians in China. This increase persecution is marked by the largest mass sentencing of church leaders in 25 years, a level of expulsion of foreign Christians not seen since the 1950s, and targeted repression of the Chinese House Church Alliance.
- Despite comments made by President Hu Jintao assuring Chinese citizens that they have religious freedom, regular raids of Christian meetings continue to take place. According to CAA,

“In May 2008 two independent sources informed China Aid Association (CAA) that the Ministry of Public Security has received funding from the Chinese Central Government to increase its campaign of eradicating house churches throughout China. Reports have been received of planned intensified persecution, with greater control and prevention of large Christian gatherings also anticipated. It is feared that harsher persecution will take place after the Olympics.”

- The report lists numerous measure taken against unregistered church in Beijing, including the following:

“On 9 May 2008 Pastor Dong Yutao, a leader of one of the largest Beijing house churches, Beijing City Revival Church, was arrested while on his way to collect a shipment of Bibles. He was placed under criminal detention by Beijing Public Security Bureau officials for receiving illegally printed Bibles and religious literature.

“On 11 May 2008 uniformed policemen and plain-clothed detectives broke into the regular worship service at Shouwang Church, in the Huajie Building near the Third Ring Road in Beijing. A plain-clothed law enforcement officer showed his identification from Haidian District Bureau of Ethnic and Religious Affairs and ordered the church to stop its activities. Members of the church were ordered to leave the premises as the gathering was illegal.

“On 25 May 2008, at approximately 9.30am, various house church gathering sites connected to the nearly 1,000-strong Beijing Gospel Church, were raided by officials from four government agencies, including the Bureau of Ethnic and Religious Affairs ... Officials forcibly entered and searched the homes of house church members without presenting search warrants or proper documentation and proceeded to confiscate religious materials. Some of those targeted sustained minor injuries from violence by

officials. Although the officials' actions were illegal, the house church members complied with their demands, even shaking their hands and pronouncing a blessing on them. Victims of the attacks described the incident in an open letter to government officials, in which they cite various laws which have been breached.”

- China has issued new restrictions against house churches—pressuring them to disband and leave Beijing. Many church leaders believe that this new tactic is meant to persecute Christians before the Beijing Olympics.
- The Ministry of Public Security of the Chinese Government has issued a general order that “all those from China and overseas who will participate in the Olympic Games, including athletes, media and sponsors, are to be strictly checked” and Ministry officials have released a “blacklist” document outlining what actions are allowed, and what materials are to be permissible.
- According to CAA, “Beijing house church leader Pastor Cai Zhuohua, who was released in September 2007 after serving three years imprisonment for “illegal business practices” for production of Christian literature, was forced to work ten to twelve hours a day making soccer balls for the 2008 Beijing Olympics while in prison.”

Trends:

- CAA has reported that there was a rise of 30.4% in the number of Christians persecuted last year compared with 2006.
- There is a rise in persecution of foreign Christians, as China conducts the largest expulsion of foreign Christians since the 1950s.
- Individuals involved in the production of Christian publications have been accused of “illegal business practices.”
- The Chinese government even refuses to accept humanitarian aid, social support, and financial support from Christians in China. After the devastating earthquake in Sichuan Province, requests from Christians (whether free or in custody) to volunteer and assist those affected have been turned down by Chinese officials. In fact, six church members were held in detention under the charge of sending money to a disaster area in the name of a house church. These church members are being held until they pay a fine.

Individuals of Concern:

- In the report, CAA has included brief accounts of individuals whose lives are currently being compromised by the Chinese government. Many of these individuals are being persecuted and detained by the Chinese government. The list of these individuals and their situations can be found [here](#).

Additional Information and Resources on Persecution in China

Wall Street Journal: [Christian Groups Step Delicately in Sichuan](#)

Christian News Wire: [Chinese Persecution of House Churches Intensifies](#)

The Vancouver Sun: [China persecuting Christians: report](#)

Wall Street Journal: [China Opens Doors To Quake Relief, But Not Missionaries](#)

Epoch Times: [President of China Interim Government Demands Human Rights for All Chinese](#)

Times Online: [China gives blessing to Olympic Bibles](#)

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